

Media Advisory
-for immediate release-

Youth Speak out about Ending Sexual and Racial Violence in our High Schools

Toronto, ON – November 24, 2005 –

Diverse Youth Peer Leaders from Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) will voice their ideas about the rights, responsibilities and actions of youth, schools, parents, media and authorities to end sexual and racial violence in Toronto.

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| Where | Metro Hall (55 John Street) Room 303 |
| When | Friday November 25, 2005 at 3:00 PM |
| What | Youth speakers from METRAC's youth violence prevention program |
| Why | Youth voices must be included in strategies to end violence in Toronto's communities |

With recent dramatic incidents of gun violence, sexual abuse, harassment, and discrimination that have surfaced, the public's attentions are focused on youth. However, the actual voices of young women and men have remained in the distant background of community, media, and institutional buzz about violence.

Youth Peer Leaders from METRAC's violence prevention program, Respect In Action (ReAct), are coming together to address this silence and publicly share their understandings of what needs to be done to make a difference. These diverse young women and men will voice what they think about the right of youth and communities to be free from violence as well as the responsibilities of the entire society to make that right a reality.

METRAC's Executive Director, Wendy Komiotis, explains: "Even though youth violence is high on the public agenda these days, diverse young people have rarely had the chance to share their perspectives about the issue. Youth are well aware of the daily pressures and disempowerment in their lives and they have valuable solutions to the violence in their communities. By ignoring the voices of youth, parents, teachers, authority figures and policy makers lose the opportunity to support young people and know what will be effective in dealing with the root causes of violence."

Komiotis continues: "METRAC's Youth Peer Leaders have been working since 2001 to deliver peer-led, youth-friendly violence prevention workshops in Toronto's schools, community centres, youth groups, shelters, and detention centres. They have long been addressing the problems our city is facing today – the stark realities of sexual violence, bullying, youth-on-youth gun violence, and systemic discrimination. These Leaders have been communicating directly with young people from all backgrounds across the GTA, engaging youth in violence prevention strategies to prepare them for responsible adulthood. Toronto would be surprised by the innovative solutions we'd discover, if we just took the time to respect and listen to youth too."